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THE WOOL MEN

Have Their Innings with the Ways and Means Committee.

INDUSTRY HAS BEEN RUINED

By the Wilson Tariff Law—Slight Difference Between Growers and Dealers as to Rates, but all Claim that a Higher Duty is Necessary to Build Up the Industry. Free Wool Has Not Benefitted the Consumer Is the General Verdict.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan. 6.—The hearing on the wool schedule of the tariff brought many farmers and manufacturers to the ways and means committee room to-day. The first speaker was John G. Clark, of the Washington county, Pennsylvania, wool growers' association. He spoke strongly of the effects of the free wool clause of the Wilson law, which he declared had prostrated the business in the United States. The experiment of free trade had been a crime. The value of lands had declined and sheep men in all parts of the country had been driven from business. The sheep raisers asked only a moderate duty that would enable them to continue in business.

The Democratic members of the committee probed the witness for some time. Mr. Wheeler, of Alabama, asked if clothing for the poor had not been cheaper under free wool, to which Mr. Clark replied that most of the clothing sold now was shoddy. Imports of shoddy had increased under the law.

One hour was given to Judge William Lawrence, the president of the national wool growers' association, to present the request of that body. The statement was an exhaustive review of the wool industry under different tariff rates during the last half century. Speaking of the effects of the Wilson law, he declared that it had stopped one-third of the wool growing business and closed one-half of the mills in the country. There had been no adequate protection on wool since 1867.

Political Aspect. Referring to the political aspects of the matter, Mr. Lawrence averred that the election of Mr. McKinley had been accomplished by the votes of the wool growers in a half dozen doubtful states who would have voted for Bryan and free silver had they not considered protection on wool more important than free silver. If this protection were not given there would be a free silver Congress two years hence and in four years a free silver President and Congress.

The McKinley bill, as it came from its author, had been moderately protective on wool, but the addition of the silver clause and ad valorem rates made it disastrous. Then came the Wilson law. Under this law the number of sheep in the United States had decreased three million a year, with a loss of \$50,000,000 according to official statistics. Unofficial and more accurate figures proved the loss to wool growers through the Wilson rates to have been \$178,500,000; mutton sheep which should be raised in this country, were being imported from Canada.

The schedule asked by the wool growers' association was twelve cents a pound on all merino wools, thirty-six cents on washed and thirty-six cents on scoured Australian unwashed wools to be considered as washed. On account of its superior lightness they said the Australian had an advantage over South American, costing comparatively little weight in washing. The dropping of the skirting clause was asked, as to secure its advantages the parts of Australian wool imported amounted to only half the fleece. To do away with this clause it was said, would give employment to 5,000 men in this country.

"Personally, I would like a much higher duty than twelve cents," said Mr. Lawrence, "but the growers limit their demands to that figure."

When the speaker asserted that Australia would be a great competitor of the United States in the wool trade, Mr. Wheeler, of Alabama, commented, "And that is the wool on which you ask twenty-four cents duty?"

"Well, twenty-four and nine is thirty-three cents and that wool will bring from four to seven cents more than ours in Ohio, which would leave us only about twenty-five cents. If people will use luxuries they should pay a luxurious duty."

The Difference.

"Would a pound of Australian wool be brought into this country at twenty-four cents?" asked Chairman Dingley.

"There would. Anyway, it would transfer our trade from Australia, where we have to pay in gold, to South America, where we would exchange agricultural implements and goods for their wool."

Continuing, Mr. Lawrence urged that China wool should be classed as first class, otherwise, there would be an influx which would kill the American business. Incidentally, he referred to the ad valorem system as "the most infernal scheme ever invented by rascals on earth."

As a plan to prevent a flood of imports pending the passage of a bill Judge Lawrence suggested that Congress pass at the present session a bill declaring that all articles imported after the first day of the first session of the Fifty-fifth Congress be subject to the rates of duty of any law passed by that Congress when the new rates are an advance; bonds to be given by importers for such payments before goods can be withdrawn.

"The senator from Montana, (Carter), on my right, says that the senate might pass such a bill by October," interrupted Mr. Dingley.

As Mr. Lawrence was explaining that under the schedule proposed by his association American wool growers would supply the home market in four years, Mr. Dingley inquired how much revenue would be secured.

"A little more than by the McKinley law. Eight or ten millions during the four years," he replied.

"And finally get none," interrupted Mr. Wheeler.

"Why should we want any?" retorted Mr. Lawrence, amid laughter.

"I mean from wool," he amended. "The country will be prosperous and we can get revenue from other sources."

Mr. Turner, of Georgia, inquired if the schedule had not really been drawn to shut out the higher grades of wool, which Mr. Lawrence denied.

In reply to questions from Mr. Turner, Mr. Lawrence said the average citizen would receive \$15 worth of benefits for every \$5 advance in the price of wools. The point was then elicited that the wool growers' plan proposed an annual increase of one-half a cent a pound.

"And where would we finally land?" inquired Mr. Dingley.

"The increase would end at 15 cents a pound," was the explanation.

Consumers Hear of It.

The consumer was represented at the afternoon session by Theodore Justice,

a wool dealer of Philadelphia. He stated that while the trial of free wool under the Wilson law had slightly benefited the consumer by reduction in prices, the saving had been greatly outweighed by the loss in purchasing power. The gain in price per capita, while the loss amounted to more than \$7. The average loss to the wool grower had been \$422.82, while the mill hands and laborers of the United States had lost \$25,000,000 during the past year.

The McKinley law had given the cheapest priced clothing ever known up to its time. He gave figures showing the effects of the tariff in 1867, under which dorks had increased 25 per cent in four years; that of 1883, the "worst ever known," the McKinley law, under which dorks increased 13 per cent, and the last period, under the Wilson law, he said: "When it was known that Gravel Cleveland had given the wool industry with the assistance of both branches of Congress, farmers began to dispose of their flocks."

From 1893 to 1896 the number of sheep had decreased 23 per cent, and there were now fewer in the United States than in 1855. Had the McKinley law been continued the United States would be able to produce its full consumption of 600,000,000 pounds of wool.

Mr. Justice presented elaborate tables showing variations in the production and prices of wool in different countries, illustrating among other points that American wools had fallen in price under free trade and Australian wools had risen. The point of sheep east of the Mississippi in 1870 was 71 and to-day 32 per cent. No harm would be done the American business if wools costing under 10 cents were admitted free, for these never would be raised profitably in the United States.

In the course of his statement Mr. Justice said that Mr. McKinley had told the wool growers and manufacturers that if they would agree upon a schedule he would accept it. Accordingly the schedule had been framed by a convention of representative manufacturers and growers and both had prospered under it.

"It would be strange if they did not prosper," when they made their own schedule," Mr. McKimlin commented, and he asked, "Was it not a fact that the manufacturers got the benefit of a part of the specific rate imposed for the benefit of the farmers?"

Farmers Prospered.

Mr. Justice assented, and continued that the farmers had disposed of all their clip under the McKinley law to the American manufacturers, who in turn had increased their exports.

Referring to shoddy, he said that while the annual importations of it under the McKinley law had been 250,000 pounds, between August and December of the year the Wilson law was enacted there had been 4,000,000 pounds imported and in the next full calendar year under that law 20,718,000 pounds. The theory of the framers of the Wilson law had been that free wool would stop importations of shoddy. No nation had ever used as little shoddy as the United States under the McKinley law. The explanation of the increased use of shoddy was that the increased importations of cheap clothes under the Wilson law compelled the American manufacturers to make such cheap clothes to compete that they were obliged to use shoddy. Moreover, there had been less money earned by all classes under the Wilson law to spend for clothes.

The next speaker, B. C. Moses, an importer of Australian and South American wools, contended that the duties asked by the wool growers' association were prohibitive and would mean death to the manufacturer. He did not believe public opinion nor the good sense of the committee sustains such a committee, but he did believe that good tariff was demanded on wool.

Delegate Catron, of New Mexico, stated that the value of the wool produced by three million sheep in that territory had decreased on an average of 11 cents a pound since the enactment of the Wilson law.

Senator Carter and W. G. Conrad, of Montana, appeared in behalf of the wool growers of their state and filed statements with the committee.

Jesse M. Smith, of Utah, president of the state wool growers' association, asserted that as sheep raising east of the Mississippi was greater than west, the western men would be satisfied with any tariff which the easterners would accept.

Wilson H. Brown, of Philadelphia, protested against discriminating against the manufacture by any scheme involving duties on wools and waste.

John Ridgeway, of Philadelphia, spoke for protection to the workingmen of South America, who would be excluded skirted wools from Australia and give employment to the wool sorters who were now walking the streets.

"During thirty-one years' experience as a wool sorter in the United States he had never seen as much suffering and loss of time among the craft as in the past three years."

The committee then adjourned.

LOUD BILL PASSES.

Prohibits Serial Publications and Fake Periodicals From Enjoying Second-Class Mail Privileges—Big Fight Against It Fails.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 6.—The Loud bill to amend the law relating to second class mail matter was passed by the house to-day after two days of debate, by a vote of 144 to 103. The opposition to the bill made a strong fight against it. The statements made on the floor as to its effect on certain particulars, were very conflicting. The most important provision of the bill denied the serial publications admission to the mails at one cent per pound rates. It is as follows:

"That nothing herein contained shall be construed as to admit to the second class rate publications purporting to be issued periodically and to subscribers but which are merely books or reprints of books, whether they be issued complete or in parts, whether they be bound or unbound, whether they be sold by subscription or otherwise, or whether they purport to be premiums or supplements or parts of regular newspapers or periodicals."

The bill also denies to newspapers "the sample copy" privilege and the privilege enjoyed by news dealers of returning unsold publications at the second class rate.

The only other important change in the present law provides that publishers whose publications are admitted as second class mail matter shall be required before depositing such mail matter in the post office, to separate the same into United States mail sacks or bundles by states, cities, towns, and counties as the postmaster may direct.

Mr. Grayson, (Rep., Ohio), created a flurry at the opening of the session of the house to-day by securing the adoption as a question of privilege, of a resolution calling on the several departments for statements as to why they had failed to comply with a former resolution of the house, passed at its instance on June 5, requesting information of the several departments relative to the administration of the civil service law. He made sarcastic comments on the matter.

The resolution calls for information as to the number of employees in each department who have died, resigned or been removed since March 4, 1889, the number appointed under the civil service rules and the number not appointed under such rules who are now covered by the extension of the civil service rules.

General debate on the law relating to second class mail matter was then resumed. Mr. Bingham, (Rep., Penna.), made speeches against the bill, the latter calling attention to the vast sums expended by the government for the general welfare, the thousands of tons of mail matter carried free under the bill, the information of the people, the millions of acres and dollars expended for the development of commerce, the vast sums expended at the centennial, world's fair, and other expositions for the enlightenment of the people. Cheap rates for books were, he argued, a part and a necessary part of the government's general scheme for the education of the people.

Mr. Loud closed the general debate in advocacy of his measure.

He replied to many of the arguments advanced against the bill and closed with an earnest appeal for its passage.

The bill was then read for amendment, the purpose of which was to permit the transmission of second class matter of serial publications and books when sent as parts of regular newspapers.

Mr. Loud said the amendment would defeat the purpose of the bill.

Mr. Moody, (Rep., Mass.), made a very bitter attack on the opposition to the bill.

The Tracy amendment was withdrawn when the committee rose at 4 o'clock, and the vote was taken on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

This was a test vote on the bill. The motion was carried 144-103. The opposition made no further effort in the face of this defeat.

The bill was passed without division, and at 4:30 p. m., the house adjourned.

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Of Two Men and Terrible Injury of Two Others.

EXPLOSION IN THE OIL FIELD.

A Boiler Blows Up with Fearful Results. While Five Men are Engaged About It an Explosion Occurs Without Warning. One of the Victims Blown Two Hundred Feet in the Air, and His Body Lands Three Hundred Feet Away.

Special Dispatch to the Intelligencer.

SISTERSVILLE, W. Va., Jan. 6.—A terrible accident occurred in the Benwood oil field this morning about 10 o'clock, when one of the boilers of the Fisher Oil Company, on the David Howell lease exploded and killed two men and injured several others. The intelligence of the affair reached here a few minutes after 10 o'clock and there was a great deal of excitement for a long time, until it was learned who the killed and injured were, as there are a large number of people working over there whose homes are in this city. The story of the explosion as well as could be learned was that early this morning a gang of the Fisher's men went to the Howell No. 3, to connect up the boiler, and at the time of the accident were busy at work, and one of the men was on top of the boiler assisting to make the connections.

Five people were about the boiler and every one of them was either killed or badly injured. William Austin, the man who was on top of the boiler, was thrown up into the air a distance of 200 feet, and when he alighted was 300 feet away from where the explosion took place. Sam Bigler, the other man killed, the farm boss for the Fisher company, was also thrown up into the air a considerable distance, and struck the ground about the same distance away as Austin. Both of the men were dead and had been mangled in a terrible way by the flying debris from the boiler.

The injured men were James Nolan, a drifter, Sam Hinkle, a tool dresser, and Eugene Emery, a roustabout. At the time the explosion occurred Emery was standing out in the open about thirty feet from the boiler, holding a two inch line pipe, and was knocked down by the concussion and very seriously scalded. In addition his right eye was blown from his head, and he suffered a great many deep wounds about the body. He is perhaps the worst hurt of any of those who were injured and there is a possibility that he will not recover from the shock and the injuries received.

Samuel Hinkle, the tool dresser, was standing near the boiler at the time it exploded and was literally filled with small pieces of iron and other debris, and is so severely injured that he will have a hard struggle to pull through with his life.

The drifter, James Nolan, was in the rig at the well at the time the boiler exploded and was pretty badly hurt by the flying debris, but will recover. He was walking about a short time after the explosion.

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